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GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT

Letter dated 7 May 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Singapore to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to refer to note CDA/9-96/APLM dated 23 January 1996 from the Centre for Disarmament Affairs regarding resolution 50/70 O, entitled "Moratorium on the export of anti-personnel land-mines", which was adopted by the General Assembly on 12 December 1995.

Singapore shares the deep concern expressed by many members of the international community regarding the humanitarian problems caused by anti-personnel land-mines (APLs). The irresponsible and indiscriminate use of land-mines poses grave dangers to civilian populations and is a serious threat to the safety and lives of personnel participating in United Nations humanitarian, peace-keeping and rehabilitation programmes and operations. Singapore therefore endorses the call by the General Assembly to increase mine-clearing efforts by the international community.

Singapore has decided to institute, with immediate effect, a two-year moratorium on the export of APLs that have no self-destruct or self-neutralizing mechanisms. In our view, APLs with no self-destruct or self-neutralizing mechanisms are the fundamental cause of the humanitarian problems caused by land-mines as they continue to inflict harm on civilian populations long after emplacement.

Singapore shares the view expressed by several countries during the fiftieth session of the General Assembly that it is not practical to have a blanket ban on all types of APLs as many countries still see the need for APLs for legitimate self-defence purposes. Attempts to eliminate APLs altogether can

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be counter-productive as some countries will regard such moves as a threat to their security. A lack of general support could also set back efforts to achieve a consensus on how to eliminate the humanitarian problems caused by APLs. Singapore is committed to working with members of the international community to find a durable solution to this problem.

I further have the honour to request that the present letter be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 71 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) Bilahari KAUSIKAN